

Message Text

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ACTION OES-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00 ERDA-07 CIAE-00

H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-02 PM-03

PRS-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 TRSE-00

DODE-00 NSC-05 ACDA-10 BIB-01 FEA-01 /115 W

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R 141725Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9379

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

UNCLAS PARIS 12213

DEPT FOR OES/SCI

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, FR, IN

SUBJECT: FRENCH-INDIAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION

REF: A) PARIS 13729 B) IAEA VIENNA 3548

1. ON MAY 4, 5, AND 6, LE MONDE CARRIED A SERIES ON THE INDIAN NUCLEAR WEAPON CAPABILITY, WRITTEN BY NICOLAS VICHNEY SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH. VICHNEY, LE MONDE'S NUCLEAR EXPERT OVER THE PAST DECADE, WAS UNUSUALLY WELL-INFORMED, INDEPENDENT, AND RELIABLE. THE SERIES HAS BEEN FORWARDED TO EMBASSY NEW DELHI. BELOW ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS.

2. FRENCH NUCLEAR ATTITUDES: VICHNEY DESCRIBED THE OCT 25 STATEMENT BY GISCARD D'ESTAING "AS A FIRST STEP NOT TOWARD THE SIGNATURE BY FRANCE OF THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY -- THAT WOULD PROBABLY PROVOKE GRATUITOUSLY A STRONG REACTION FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY -- BUT TOWARD THE CONTROL SYSTEM OF THE INTER-
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NATIONAL AGENCY (IAEA)" (REF B). HE FELT THE INDIAN

EXPLOSION SUPPORTED THE FRENCH THESIS THAT THE NPT IS UNABLE TO ATTAIN ITS OBJECTIVE. DESPITE INDIAN RELUCTANCE, THE FRENCH ARE INSISTING ON SAFEGUARDING THE EXPERIMENTAL FAST BREEDER THEY ARE BUILDING FOR THE INDIANS (REF A).

3. INDIA'S NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE CAPABILITY: VICHNEY QUOTES INDIAN AEC DIRECTOR SETHNA, THAT "INDIA IS NOT A NUCLEAR WEAPON POWER" AND DESCRIBES SETHNA'S ARGUMENT AS:

A) THE GOVT'S BUDGET, WHICH IS PRESENTED IN AN OPEN, DETAILED WAY, SHOWS NO TRACE OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON PROGRAM;

B) INDIA COULD NEVER HAVE THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO PURSUE A NUCLEAR "FORCE DE DISSUASION;"

C) INDIA WAS NOT SEEKING THE CAPABILITY TO PRODUCE THE HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM NEEDED FOR A HYDROGEN BOMB CAPABILITY;

D) THE ATOMIC ENERGY ACT, DEFINING THE POWERS OF THE INDIAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION, FORBIDS ALL MILITARY RESEARCH; AND

E) SECRECY IS NOT MAINTAINED AT THE TROMBAY CENTER WHERE ALMOST ALL NUCLEAR RESEARCH IS CONCENTRATED.

4. FOR SETHNA, THE INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE CAPABILITY WILL BE USED TO UNDERTAKE LARGE PROJECTS IN THE HIMALAYAS AND TO EXPLOIT OFF-SHORE PETROLEUM PROJECTS. VICHNEXSN WHILE NOT REJECTING SETHNA'S ARGUMENT, SUGGESTS INDIA WANTED THE PRESTIGE OF BEING A NUCLEAR POWER AND FEARED GROWING CHINESE MILITARY POWER. RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR ENERGY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS12213
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750170-0438
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750553/aaaabvzo.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 PARIS 13729, 75 IAEA VIENNA 3548
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUL 2003 by maginmm>; APPROVED <05 FEB 2004 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH-INDIAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION
TAGS: TECH, FR, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006